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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001979

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/INS, LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY, NSC FOR MILLARD

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS UNSUCCESSFUL IN TWO ATTACKS ON  
ARMED POLICE

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary. On October 10 and 12, Maoists launched the two largest attacks on Nepalese security forces since before the January 2003 ceasefire. In both incidents, between 300 and 500 Maoists attacked Armed Police Force (APF) camps in the southern lowlands (Terai) of the mid-western region. The armed police, with some Royal Nepal Army (RNA) support, managed successfully to repel both attacks with only limited casualties. The clashes resulted in the confirmed deaths of between 62 - 78 Maoists and 17 APF personnel. Over 45 weapons were recovered from the Maoists while security forces lost 11 Self-Loading Rifles (SLRs) and three .303 rifles. According to Chief of Army Staff Thapa, the success of the security forces' defense was due in large part to intelligence received from local villagers and support from RNA helicopters. The willingness of locals to provide the government with information, coupled with fewer numbers of Maoist attackers than prior to the ceasefire, could indicate a loss of popular support for the insurgency. End Summary.

2. (U) At approximately 2100 hours on October 10, roughly 450 Maoists attacked an Armed Police Force (APF) base staffed with roughly 150 security personnel near the main East-West highway in Banke District in the western Terai of Nepal. The media reported that the Maoists first attacked with 2-inch mortars from 24 locations around the camp's perimeter and then attempted unsuccessfully to overrun the camp. Press reports also indicate that 53 Maoists were killed (although only 37 bodies were recovered) while three APF personnel died and five others were wounded during the eight-hour-long gun battle. The APF recovered 10 Indian-made SLR rifles, 2 sub-machine guns, 16 .303 rifles, 6 shot-guns and three 12-bore guns from the insurgents. Eyewitnesses reported that the Maoists fled after Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and APF reinforcements arrived from nearby Nepalgunj and Shamshegunj. According to local villagers, two to three days before the attack, the Maoists had ordered each household to send one person along with weapons to join the insurgents, but many refused to cooperate.

3. (U) Media sources suggest that the Maoists chose to attack the camp in Banke District because the camp had been established in June in order to prevent the Maoists from importing weapons from India. This attack was the second Maoist attack on the Banke APF camp; the first was on September 5.

4. (U) At approximately 2215 hours on October 12, at least 300 Maoists in Bhalubang Bazaar in neighboring Dang District launched an assault on a second APF camp. Police sources indicate that roughly 25 insurgents were killed while 14 APF personnel died and 11 were wounded during the seven-hour-long clash. Twelve of the 14 armed policemen killed were ambushed while returning from a patrol in the surrounding area; the two other APF personnel were killed at a road block outside the camp. The Maoists reportedly struck the training camp four times with 81mm rocket launchers that had been looted from an RNA camp two years ago. The insurgents also snapped three layers of barbed wire that lay around the camp's perimeter in an attempt to penetrate the camp.

5. (C) In response to the attack, the RNA sent two helicopters: one with night vision capability and one without. However, according to COAS Thapa, the full moon and clear skies enabled the helicopters to operate successfully and helped the APF to repel the insurgents. The moonlight enabled the helicopters to drop mortar rounds through jerry-rigged PCV pipe sections onto the Maoist positions. The retreating Maoists reportedly seized three passenger buses on the main East-West highway, using them to extract their dead and injured from the area. Security forces recovered four .303 rifles and one shotgun while security personnel lost 10 SLRs to the Maoists.

6. (C) The Chief of Army Staff, General Pyar Jung Thapa, publicly praised the Armed Police Force for successfully repelling the Maoist attacks. Thapa also reported to the Ambassador that the success of the security forces was due, in part, to intelligence received from local citizens prior to the attack.

7. (C) Comment. Following a relative lull in Maoist activity

during the Dasain holiday, these attacks represent the most massive Maoist assaults since before the January 2003 ceasefire. The fact that the insurgents used scarce munitions suggests that the attacks were intended to be major operations. However, the numbers of Maoists attackers were far lower than similar attacks in 2002. Both the Banke and Dang District attacks involved significant planning, most likely at the national level. The Maoists reportedly had maps of both camps and managed to block large sections of the East-West highway prior to the attacks despite local curfews. What the Maoists perhaps were not counting on was that local villagers would provide security forces with valuable intelligence on the insurgents' movements in and around the area. The ability of the security forces to capitalize on local intelligence gathering is a new trend and, coupled with the reduced number of Maoist attackers, might indicate a decline in grassroots support for the Maoist insurgency. Also, as COAS Thapa raised with the Ambassador, is the question of why the Maoists chose clear moonlit nights for these assaults in rapid succession when aerial operations would have an advantage. One explanation is that the Maoist leadership is impatient for a victory to boost insurgent morale and replenish supplies of arms and ammunition. End Comment.

MALINOWSKI